

# Enabling Nelson Tasman's Economic Recovery

Briefing for Ministers | 2026

*A more  
productive,  
resilient  
Nelson Tasman*

**NELSON  
REGIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
AGENCY**

# Our economy at a glance

Unless otherwise stated, all figures throughout this document are informed by the Nelson Tasman Regional Economic Briefing<sup>1</sup> and Infometrics<sup>2</sup>.



Population

**114,200**



Size of economy

**\$7.6bn**



Number of businesses

**14,703**



Proportion of small businesses  
(<20 employees)

**96.5%**



Nelson Tasman mean earnings  
vs NZ \$81,958

**\$71,004**



GDP per filled job

**\$127,049**



Productivity gap

**\$1.7bn**



Doubling productivity growth  
would close the gap  
by 2050

## Strong opportunity for growth

Sectors with high regional competitive advantage.

### Blue Economy



5 x concentration  
of jobs vs NZ

### Forestry



Most specialised  
processing in NZ

### Food, Beverage & Wellness Products



High added-value  
products, \$1.2bn exports

### Science and Technology



Highest concentration  
of jobs in NZ, 16% job  
growth in five years

### Tourism



1.5 x per capita visitation  
vs NZ<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nelson Tasman Regional Economic Briefing March 2026, People and Places

<sup>2</sup> Nelson Tasman Regional Economic Profile, Infometrics, January 2026

<sup>3</sup> MBIE Accommodation Data Programme, year to January 2026

Nelson Tasman Briefing for Ministers, March 2026. Contact: Fiona Wilson, CE NRDA [fiona.wilson@nelsontasman.nz](mailto:fiona.wilson@nelsontasman.nz)

# Introduction

Kia ora and welcome to the 2026 Nelson Tasman Briefing for Ministers, summarising our economic performance and strategic opportunities, including opportunities to partner with Government.

**Our investment priorities are informed by strategic economic analysis.** They have been identified in consultation with regional leaders as having the greatest immediate potential to lift our regional and national economies.

As a region that has for over 20 years consistently recorded the second-lowest productivity nationally (18% below the national average), **Nelson Tasman has a substantial and immediate opportunity to realise significant productivity gains, through focused and accelerated investment.** The Government's Going For Growth agenda aligns closely with the challenges and opportunities presented in this document.

Beneath our region's stunning landscapes and enviable lifestyle offerings, our key statistics trail national averages. **We are working collaboratively and actively to leverage our regional competitive advantages** and unlock and accelerate transformational opportunities.

**We are seeking effective partnership with Government:** by leveraging opportunities and investing in regional infrastructure, we can make a major economic contribution to New Zealand, lift regional returns and productivity, boost exports, and tackle our economic and infrastructure challenges.

**Resilience is a key focus for our regional economic growth,** and for many of our priorities for investment. This 2026 briefing has been finalised in context of the Tasman 2025 Flood Events which caused widespread damage to large areas of infrastructure and private property, particularly in our rural communities.

**We acknowledge Government's support for our region.** In the context of regional resilience, the benefits of the strengthening of works recently undertaken on the Motueka River stopbanks was clearly evident during the 2025 floods. Funded by the Government's 'Beyond the Deluge' Regional Infrastructure Fund package, this work ensured these stopbanks coped with the highest river flows on record and undoubtedly prevented further loss of property, infrastructure and life.

Immediate and ongoing support from multiple Government agencies has been critical to our response and recovery to the 2025 Flood Events.

We also acknowledge the Government's commitment in Budget 2025 to Project Whakatapuranga the Nelson Hospital Redevelopment, as a critical upgrade to our region's health care provision which has been long sought.

**As we recover from the Tasman 2025 Flood Events,** we have been further rocked by a series of closure/downsizing announcements within our primary industries. Managing and trying to mitigate these significant cumulative impacts requires collaborative efforts across government-

agencies and local organisations, spotlighting again the need for this region to build productivity and resilience to economic shocks.

We look forward to working with you as we support the economic growth of Nelson Tasman.



**Sarah Jane Weir**  
Board Chair, NRDA



**Hon Dr Nick Smith**  
Mayor, Nelson City



**Tim King**  
Mayor, Tasman District

# Summary of priorities for investment and partnership

Our investment priorities are informed by strategic economic analysis. They have been identified in consultation with regional leaders as having the greatest immediate potential to lift our regional and national economies. Importantly, these projects are seeking a range of types of Government support, beyond funding.

As a part of our selection process, we have cross-referenced our projects and partnering opportunities against the Five Pillars outlined in the Government’s Going For Growth Agenda: developing talent; competitive business settings; promoting global trade and investment; innovation, technology and science; infrastructure for growth.

## Opportunities for Government to partner with Nelson Tasman

Priority, implementation-ready projects to support Nelson Tasman’s economic growth and resilience.

The Blue Economy		Core community infrastructure and resilience		Vibrant places and heritage	
Investments	The Ask of Government	Investments	The Ask of Government	Investments	The Ask of Government
Cawthron Aquaculture Park expansion ** <i>Global, National, Regional, Sector Significance</i>	  	Project Whakatupuranga Nelson Hospital redevelopment + <i>Regional, Sector Significance</i>		Enabling MTB access through the Abel Tasman National Park ** <i>National, Regional, Sector Significance</i>	
Nelson marine industry infrastructure <i>Regional Significance</i>	 	Transport and roading infrastructure – The Hope Bypass + <i>Regional Significance</i>		Nelson to Pelorus Hoiere off-road MTB/bike packing route ** <i>National, Regional, Sector Significance</i>	
Port Motueka channel access ** <i>Regional Significance</i>	 	Waimea Plains infrastructure strategy ** <i>Regional Significance</i>		Nelson Haven and precincts activation <i>Regional Significance</i>	 
Supporting regional aquaculture growth <i>National, Regional, Sector Significance</i>	 	Housing affordability & supply <i>Regional Significance</i>	 	Nelson Cathedral <i>Regional Significance</i>	 
Moananui Blue Economy Cluster <i>Global, National, Regional, Sector Significance</i>	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementing the Joint Nelson Tasman FDS</li> <li>Improving supply and mix of quality, affordable housing</li> <li>Unlocking land for iwi-led housing development</li> </ul>		Nelson Provincial Museum ARC project <i>Regional Significance</i>	 
		Waimea Community Dam – restack of financial mechanisms + <i>National, Regional, Sector Significance</i>	 		
		Motueka Master Plan ** <i>Regional Significance</i>			

Key				
Funding towards project costs	Regulatory or Policy Support	General Partnership and Support. Enabling us to try new models of delivery	Critical Priorities +	New Project in this year's Briefing **

## Progress over the last 18 months

- **Bridge to Better.** A \$78.7 million infrastructure upgrade project is currently underway in central Nelson, due for completion in July 2027, which will enable housing intensification in central Nelson (\$36.3 million from the Infrastructure Acceleration Fund, \$42.4 million from Nelson City Council).
- **Port Tarakohe.** Following the Tasman District Council's \$6.7 million investment into Port Tarakohe concrete wharf repairs (including a new 'resilience ramp'), lighting, water supply, new fendering and commercial berths, Kanoa provided a \$6 million concessionary loan to fund a replacement wharf and a new ablution and office building. Work was completed in July 2025.
- **Port Nelson Slipway.** A \$20 million project secured \$9.8 million from Kanoa to upgrade the slipway and install a new travel lift. The works mean our region can now service vessels up to 550 tonnes. Work was completed in early 2025.
- Nelson City Council has continued with the **extensive recovery works from the August 2022 severe weather event**, primarily for infrastructure repairs and flood protection projects, including betterment (i.e. building back better) to provide resilience against future weather events. The recovery programme is forecast to run until 2028/29.
- We have delivered/continue to deliver works funded by the **Regional Infrastructure Fund's flood resilience package**. e.g. The Lower Motueka River Stopbank Refurbishment (Government contributing \$6 million/total costs \$11 million) and the Maitai River Flood Management Project (Government contributing \$5.4 million/total costs \$9 million).
- The **Waimea Community Dam** is now fully operational and was officially opened in February 2025.
- Delivering **The Joint Nelson Tasman Future Development Strategy**. Tasman District Council is currently processing seven Plan Changes. Nelson City Council's amendments to planning rules (Plan Change 29) is enabling greater intensification, housing supply and choice. The latest collaborative Annual Implementation Plan (2025) is facilitating delivery of the Joint Future Development Strategy.
- Supporting the **Maitahi Development**. Nelson City Council has committed \$31 million to supporting infrastructure, and affordable housing provision in the Maitahi Village, a 350+ house development within the wider 287 ha Fast-Track approved Bayview Maitahi development. Work has commenced.
- **A new promenade completed in August 2025 helps link the existing Maitai shared pathway to the Nelson Marina area.** Funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment through a \$1.13 million grant, and by Nelson Marina, this project is part of the wider Marina Masterplan.
- 40 little spotted kiwi (pukupuku) released into the Brook Waimārama Sanctuary in May 2025, **returning kiwi to Nelson** after a 100+ year absence, followed long-term conservation collaboration between the Sanctuary, iwi, DoC and Save the Kiwi.
- Nelson City Council has invested in its campgrounds to support tourism attraction, upgrading the **Maitai Valley Motor Camp** to increase capacity from 80 to 400 campers.
- Nelson City Council's support for a new facility for the **Nelson Surf Life Saving Club** includes funding, project support and a location within the Tāhunanui Reserve. Surf Life Saving New Zealand's Central Government Capital Fund has contributed \$1.6 million to this development.
- **Tāhunanui sawdust remediation.** Government contributed \$3.4 million (approximately 75% of costs) towards the cleanup of contaminated wood waste at Tāhunanui Beach from the new Contaminated Sites and Vulnerable Landfills Fund. Over 10,750 tonnes of contaminated material was removed. Partnering with Government has enabled the solving of a legacy environmental problem.
- The release of 2,000 16-month-old snapper into an innovative swing-moored open ocean aquaculture system at Tasman Bay, by Nelson-based BSI Plant and Food, was an important trial of potential new species in an **innovative aquaculture farming system**, and is indicative of this region's blue economy investment.
- In December 2025, **Blue House** was announced, a three-year pilot innovation hub through partnership between Westpac, Kernohan Engineering and the Nelson Regional Development Agency, to support the Blue Economy start-up pipeline and the Blue Economy Cluster 'Moananui'.
- **Historic Nelson Tenths agreement signed.** December 2025 saw the historic resolution agreement signed with the Crown to restore approximately 7,583 acres of land across Te Tauihu to Te Here-ā-Nuku Trust, and \$420 million paid in compensation.

## Raising the bar on productivity

With productivity 18% below the national average, Nelson Tasman is a ‘lagging’ region in terms of economic performance. Closing the productivity gap with the national average could bring an extra \$1.7bn of GDP. On current growth rates, it will take 61 years to achieve this. The transformational change needed will be intergenerational unless we can accelerate strategic interventions through partnering with Government.



Productivity gap

**\$1.7bn**



Closing the productivity gap at current trajectories

**61 years**

An ambitious goal for Nelson Tasman’s economy would be to double export earnings from just over \$2 billion to more than \$4 billion (in real terms) by 2050. Achieving this will require lifting productivity and developing higher-value products and new market opportunities within key industries.

**We’ve identified that our greatest potential for regional productivity gains requires a focus on:**

- Our existing key sectors and related regional competitive advantages
- Strengthening firm level behaviour and industry ecosystems
- Building investment in science, technology and innovation

## Addressing our economic challenges

### Transport connectivity and growth pressures



Population growth over last decade

**8%**

Nelson

**18%**

Tasman



Nelson is the only export port in New Zealand with no rail links

Decades of Government under-investment in our roading network is affecting our resilience. Councils are undertaking public and active transport interventions, but Government interventions are also needed on the state highway network.

We are committed to working with Government on an all-of-Government solution to the critical bottleneck (SH6) that impacts our productivity and connectivity. The delivery of the proposed

Hope Bypass project remains a key priority for our region.

SH6 is the only freight route to our port and airport making us extremely vulnerable. Disruptions, congestion, and weather-related events happen on this route often and quickly gridlock our region. Providing a state highway connection through our region that is resilient remains a key challenge. Population growth is placing increasing pressure on the network.

## Housing affordability and supply



# 7.3 x

Average house costing 7.3 x average household income

Productivity remains our top economic challenge. Other challenges include our housing affordability and supply, with the average house requiring 44% of average household income to service an average mortgage. Ongoing high demand for housing affects our ability to attract and retain talent and investment.

Both councils are providing adequate land for housing through greenfield release, supporting infrastructure, and have introduced new rules enabling intensification to ensure that land supply is not a constraining factor. However, Resource Management Act reform and policy and regulatory

changes are required to support councils to provide tools to consolidate land, enable more intensification, and reduce our reliance on greenfield sprawl. Outside of our two urban centres, housing growth needs to be matched by a correlating pace of investment in water infrastructure, digital connectivity, and transport networks.

Years of underinvestment in social housing will take time to address, but funding and new frameworks will help pilot new housing provision and ownership models.

## Workforce incomes, profile and availability



# 13%

Mean annual earnings are 13% below New Zealand average

We have New Zealand's lowest earnings as well as household incomes 23% below the national average (influenced by high retiree numbers). We have a high share of older workers; 38% of our population is aged over 55 (28.5% is the national average). Just 15.3% of our population is aged 15 to 29, compared to 19.4% nationally.

Our labour market is highly reliant on inward migration. Horticulture and tourism have high seasonal workforce needs and shortages. Strategic innovations and investments are needed to add value across our industries, support higher-value jobs and smooth out seasonality.

We have a high proportion of small businesses (91.9% have less than 10 employees) and almost 10,000 self-employed people representing 16.6% of all employment. Change processes are more challenging in small business environments, needing more support to embrace transformation and change, and presenting a practical challenge for implementation and adoption of innovation.

We have an opportunity to better leverage our older workforce and will be reflecting this in future workforce development activity.

# Recognising our strengths and realising our opportunities

We have identified opportunities in Nelson Tasman which are nationally significant, which if accelerated will make a multi-billion-dollar contribution to New Zealand, whilst making significant progress in addressing our regional challenges.



Te Taihū accounts for  
**1/3<sup>rd</sup>**  
of NZ's employment  
in fishing, aquaculture,  
and seafood processing.



Horticulture, Food and Beverage  
sector represents more than  
**15%**  
of all employment.



Tasman has approximately  
**5%**  
of NZ's plantation forests and  
the sector accounts for almost  
1,900 jobs in Nelson Tasman,  
or 3.2% of total jobs.

## The Blue Economy

The region's Blue Economy employs over 3,200 people across more than 320 businesses.<sup>1</sup> Our competitive advantage is underpinned by a clustering of activity centred around one of Australasia's largest fishing ports, combined with rich intellectual capital, boat building, engineering, textiles, scientific research, blue technology; training and education and high-value-add product specialisation (e.g. nutraceuticals).

The Government's Aquaculture Strategy identified opportunities to expand aquaculture exports from \$600 million a year to \$3 billion by 2035. With about one third of New Zealand's fishing and aquaculture employment already based here, the region can play a key role in achieving this target. Our Moananui Blue Economy Cluster fosters partnerships across aquaculture, fisheries, biotech, bluetech, ocean energy, research, engineering, and infrastructure.

## Horticulture, Food and Beverage

Our favourable growing conditions make us a significant horticultural region with an extended value chain delivering a range of high-value food and beverage products.

This sector represents more than 9,100 jobs, significantly more per capita than any other region. There are opportunities to invest in research and innovation, including into new high-value products and nutraceutical and wellness ingredients.

The local BSI Plant and Food Research Group's assets and capabilities, and a burgeoning cluster of companies/processors exploring nutrition opportunities support the strong platform we can build from.

## Forestry and Wood Product Manufacturing

About 5% of New Zealand's plantation forest volume is in Nelson Tasman, with a similar share in neighbouring Marlborough. Despite a recent sawmill closure, the region remains a leader in adding value within the forestry sector. Nelson Tasman has the country's highest concentration of specialist processing, particularly laminated and structural wood products and associated adhesives.

Nelson's modern airport terminal highlights the potential for engineered wood in commercial construction, with further opportunities driven by strong housing demand and sustainable building practices.

Nelson Tasman **exports total over \$2.1 billion**, just over **three quarters** of which is driven by **food, beverage and forestry**, while service exports are tourism-driven. An estimated \$2 billion growth<sup>2</sup> could be achieved by investing to lift productivity within key industries of competitive advantage (the Blue Economy, Forestry, Food, Beverage & Wellness Products, and Tourism), and by pursuing new market opportunities that have been identified (especially in the Blue Economy).

<sup>1</sup> Source: See NRDA Blue Economy at a glance, available at <https://www.nelsontasman.nz/do-business/our-economic-strengths/blue-economy/>

<sup>2</sup> Source: Benje Patterson (2025), unpublished memo: An ambitious export growth target for Nelson Tasman



Per capita we have the

**#1**

highest number of  
scientists in NZ.



Over

**7%**

of jobs are supported  
by Tourism.



**570**

Māori-owned businesses  
and a further 612 self-employed  
Māori in Nelson Tasman.

### Science, Technology & intellectual capital

Our existing science and research institutions and their talent and capabilities have a global profile and deep track records in innovation and commercialisation.

We can build from our existing high percentage of self-employed people in professional services who can export their high-value 'weightless' services nationally and internationally.

We can also build from our existing research and science capabilities and establish Nelson Tasman as a globally recognised knowledge economy centre.

### The Visitor Economy

The Visitor Economy in Nelson Tasman averages 48% more visitors in accommodation each night relative to its population than the national average (30.4 guests per 1,000 residents versus 20.5 nationally). Our Visitor Economy acts as our 'shop front,' and supports the attraction and retention of talent and investment.

However, our region experiences distinct peaks and troughs in tourist activity throughout the year, with visitor flows in peak times straining local resources, leading to economic challenges and limited growth opportunities.

Addressing seasonality issues and better visitor flows during peak season with strategic infrastructure development is crucial for fostering a more sustainable and resilient Visitor Economy in Nelson Tasman.

### The Māori Economy

Māori entrepreneurship is a key component of Nelson Tasman's business landscape. In 2023<sup>3</sup> there were 570 Māori-owned businesses in Nelson Tasman, up from 480 in Nelson Tasman in 2021. In addition there were 612 self-employed Māori in Te Taihū.

The eight iwi of Te Taihū are key investors in the region, and have grown their post-settlement net asset bases to over \$1 billion. Much of this capital is invested locally into projects which enhance the region's economic, cultural, and environmental wellbeing. Iwi also have a demonstrated track record of collaboration, which is exemplified by their creation of the Te Kotahi o Te Taihū Charitable Trust in 2021.

Māori employment reached 6,308 in 2025 at an average annual growth rate of 3.1% per annum since 2015, compared to 1.2% for the general population.

<sup>3</sup> Te Matapaeroa 2023, Te Puni Kōkiri, 2025

# Recognising our strengths and realising our opportunities



Over  
**1,700**  
arts, cultural and sporting  
events per annum.\*



Inward migration provides  
**100%**  
of our population growth.



**24%**  
of our population  
is aged 65+.

## The Creative Economy

Our Creative Economy can enhance economic development, including talent attraction and entrepreneurship. Beyond job creation and related value chain activities, our strong Creative Economy rounds out the multifaceted lifestyle offering that attracts visitors, talent, and businesses to our region.

Delivering sustainable career and business development in the creative sector will support our hospitality and visitor sectors, as well as provide new layers of inspirational and innovative thinking across our communities, including our business ecosystems.

## Lifestyle wellbeing & working trends

The increased focus on lifestyle and wellbeing favours Nelson Tasman and our lifestyle attraction, as evidenced by high migration over recent years.

Our region has a significant opportunity to attract and retain talent on the back of our liveability, evolving work practices in some industries, and remote working trends.

We need fit-for-purpose infrastructure to support new working models specifically, and higher inward migration generally - for example, improved transportation networks, digital connectivity, and access to health services. Our infrastructure challenges are exacerbated as our population spreads significantly beyond our two main urban centres and into our smaller towns and rural areas.

## Health care and social assistance

Around 24% of Nelson Tasman's population is aged 65 or older, compared with 17% nationally. This rapidly ageing population creates long-term opportunities for growth within the health care and social assistance sector, including innovation in health care models and technologies. Opportunities also exist to better serve and target the 'silver economy'.

Population growth in Nelson Tasman is now exclusively reliant on migration from other parts of New Zealand and overseas. Natural increase (births minus deaths) has been negative for the past three years (2023, 2024, and 2025), due to the region's ageing demographic.

\* Nelson Tasman events listings

# The Blue Economy is a key economic focus

Whilst still working across all our key sectors, we maintain our attention on the Blue Economy based on its potential, with focused investment, to deliver transformational and scaled outcomes for our region and for New Zealand. Through initiatives supporting research, sustainable enterprise, and infrastructure development, the Blue Economy strengthens regional resilience and creates high-value jobs.

**Nelson Tasman is the hub of New Zealand's Blue Economy. With over 320 unique businesses and competitive assets, we boast a diverse ecosystem of support services.**

- Port Nelson:
  - One of Australasia's largest fishing ports and headquarters for Talley's and Sealord, two of the three largest quota-holders.
  - No other city, including Auckland, has almost every marine service provider within walking distance of the main port.
- Te Taihu produces 52% of New Zealand's salmon and 71% of Greenshell™ mussels.\*
- New water space allocations will increase the farmed aquaculture space in Golden and Tasman Bays to over 3,000 ha by 2029.
- Leading activities across emerging industries such as blue carbon, seaweed innovation, open ocean farming and marine biotech have a presence here.

**Iwi, hapū and whānau involvement in the Blue Economy activities is strong.**

- Maara Moana – an iwi aquaculture consortium of the eight iwi of Te Taihu.
- Sealord – 50% owned by Māori.

**Home to world-leading capabilities in marine science, research, technology, training and law.**

- Science; Cawthron Institute, BSI Plant and Food Research Group's Seafood Research Unit and Earth Sciences NZ.
- Research – The Cawthron Aquaculture Park houses the National Algae Research Centre and Finfish Research Centre, and commercial partnerships (including SpatNZ, Moana and Marlborough Oysters).
- High-value processing – specialist businesses extract high value ingredients for marine oils and nutraceuticals.
- Law – only dedicated marine law practice in the South Pacific.

- Health & Safety – champions of maritime safety, including Marine SAFE and FirstMate programmes.
- Engineering – long-standing marine engineering capabilities, including new focus on open-ocean aquaculture and a modern 10,000 sqm engineering design space.
- Technology – production of world leading ocean observation and AI technology.
- Training – the International Maritime Institute of New Zealand and NMIT Aquaculture offers world-class aquaculture programmes at Certificate, Bachelor, and Postgraduate levels. Nelson is home to Skipper Training NZ.

Our Blue Economy is ripe for growth and innovation, and is our region's best opportunity to drive simultaneous economic, environmental and social gains. Nelson Tasman also offers the greatest opportunity to scale the national Blue Economy.

By working and investing together, we are focused on:

- Creating infrastructure that will accelerate innovation, commercialisation success, and attract investment.
- Advancing our marine expertise and capabilities through enabling research, science and engineering facilities.
- Increasing our global profile and reputation for Blue Economy development.
- Equitable social outcomes and increased iwi/Māori participation.
- Accelerating our Blue Economy innovation pipeline with increased private investment funds.
- Adding value and growing exports.
- Addressing challenges and opportunities presented by climate change.

Our continued focus on the Blue Economy will significantly leverage recent investments in upgrades to Port Tarakohe, and the new slipway and travel lifts at Port Nelson and Nelson Marina.

\* Source: AQNZ, Aquaculture for New Zealand: a sector overview 2024

# Cawthron Aquaculture Park expansion

## How can the Government help:



### Cawthron Institute

- Regulatory support.
- Capital investment into the expansion of the Cawthron Aquaculture Park. Due to commercial sensitivities, details of this project will be discussed with individual Ministers. A RIF application to Kanoa has been lodged. The Cawthron Institute is unable to raise equity (i.e. cannot issue shares), and in the current economic climate is unable to raise debt funding.
- Catalytic crowding in capital investment from Government would attract and accelerate private investment from new tenants.
- Relevant support from Invest NZ and MPI.

Return on investment will include greater resilience in the face of climate impacts, new high-value export products, regional job creation, and a strengthened science-industry ecosystem that positions New Zealand at the forefront of global marine innovation.

### Wakatū Incorporation

As landowner, Wakatū is seeking to provide an appropriately zoned and serviced site for aquaculture-related tenants to establish research and production facilities. Wakatū would like to explore the potential and viability of a specific zoning over its land, under the Local Plan, to support this unique project that will deliver benefits of national significance. Clarity and certainty around consenting will be important for all investors in this project.

Wakatū are currently refining development costs. If there is a Feasibility Gap around the upfront costs, Wakatū would like to engage with Government to identify opportunities for support with capital costs (grants or loans).

### Readiness:

The Cawthron Institute and Wakatū Incorporation are both ready to engage with Government immediately.

## Expansion of Cawthron Aquaculture Park (CAP) will directly enable new investment by industry partners into:

- A new mussel hatchery for Clearwater (construction is now underway).
- A new mussel hatchery and breeding programme with commercial partners MacLab and the Coromandel Mussel consortium (Pare Hauraki, OPV and Gulf Mussels).
- New land-based RAS salmon facilities (e.g. smolt) to support open ocean farming.
- New land-based aquaculture pilots.
- Expanded seaweed and algae production aligned with the National Algae Research Centre.
- A potential food processing facility for alternative proteins derived from marine sources.

## Companies in the shellfish and salmon sector are already expressing interest in developing assets on the CAP Expansion. Forecast medium term investment attraction is over \$50 million.

This significant project will require thoughtful engagement with environmental and iwi stakeholders. Climate change adaptation will also be factored in the project's design – long term wetland restoration or a second culvert would also allow for the upgraded stormwater and flood protection that is essential for the site's long-term viability.

Investment into an expanded CAP would support domestic growth and enhance New Zealand's export potential and global reputation in sustainable marine technology. **Government's role in enabling this next phase of growth for the Cawthron Aquaculture Park is pivotal.**

Investment will fund new hard infrastructure, including ground engineering, water management systems (pipe works, ponds, chambers and control systems), bunding and other flood protection, improved road access, and upgraded electrical systems.

The investment will upgrade infrastructure within the existing CAP, providing increased resilience, and it will unlock the ability of Cawthron to utilise its remaining undeveloped land and, expand aquaculture operations into a neighbouring 80 ha site (Horoirangi) owned by Wakatū Incorporation. Wakatū and CAP are currently working together to scope the servicing upgrades and consenting pathway to unlock 20 ha of Horoirangi for onshore aquaculture development. This project aligns with Wakatū's long term intergenerational goals of sustainable land use, supporting the local economy and creating skilled employment opportunities.

**Context:**

- The Cawthron Institute, based in Nelson, is a globally recognised leader in marine and freshwater science. With over a century of research excellence, Cawthron has played a crucial role in supporting New Zealand's primary sectors. Many of Cawthron's advances have set global benchmarks, especially in aquaculture, where its applied science has unlocked new commercial frontiers and supported the growth of sustainable marine farming.
- A core engine of this impact is the Cawthron Aquaculture Park (CAP), a purpose-built, world-class research and technology centre located just 15 minutes from Nelson's CBD. The CAP is a nationally significant asset, designed to accelerate aquaculture and marine biotechnology development through collaborative science and industry partnerships. It is home to modern laboratories, seawater infrastructure, and biosecure propagation facilities that support work on species such as algae, shellfish, and finfish.
- The CAP enables research that directly benefits New Zealand's aquaculture sector — for example, improving the thermotolerance of king salmon, enhancing the survival of Greenshell mussel spat, and cultivating high-value seaweed and algae species. These advances are not just scientific wins; they have real-world economic implications — for example, recent spat supply shortages caused by adverse environmental conditions have highlighted just how critical the CAP is to national resilience and the security of the aquaculture industry.
- The existing 20 ha CAP site is also a hub of industry collaboration. It houses commercial hatcheries (such as SpatNZ, Moana, and FlipFarm), teaching labs operated by the Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology, and the Finfish Research Centre, which supports salmon industry innovation. The National Algae Research Centre attracts international interest due to New Zealand's rich Exclusive Economic Zone and world-class marine expertise.
- The CAP offers unique advantages. Beyond its central coastal location and access to seawater, future investment will leverage an established network of expertise, proven success in translating research into commercial application, and a track record of collaboration across sectors.

- The CAP is already a trusted platform for innovation and investment. Its ability to deliver on future potential hinges on strategic expansion and infrastructure development.

**Cawthron estimates that once new hatcheries are completed in the CAP Expansion, they will supply over 50% of New Zealand's greenshell mussel spat and 100% of New Zealand's oyster spat for our shellfish industry.**

**The CAP Expansion will play a critical role in delivering on New Zealand's strategic target to grow the aquaculture industry to \$3 billion\* per annum. The CAP's forecast contribution to this, through spat production alone, will be \$1 billion.**

**Construction costs for the two projects are expected to be over \$30 million of international and domestic investment, creating 80 short-term roles between them, and in the long term employ at least 40 highly skilled roles. Further research and support roles will also be required at Cawthron to support the ongoing innovation needs of tenants.**

\* NZ Aquaculture Development Plan 2025-2030



Cawthron Aquaculture Park, Glenduan, Nelson. Credit: The Cawthron Institute

## Nelson marine industry infrastructure

### How can the Government help:



Phase one of the marina's 15-year \$130 million Masterplan has been supported by Kanoa. We are confident that MBIE officials will work closely with us to ensure the works funded by the Regional Infrastructure Fund are delivered and regional impacts captured.

We seek ongoing partnership with Government to ensure that our collective investments in our marine industry infrastructure are leveraged, and that we work together at every opportunity to position and grow Nelson as a world-class marine services facility.

**Readiness:**  
This project is underway.

Nelson Marina's 15-year \$130 million Marina Masterplan was approved by Nelson City Council in 2022. In January 2026 the Government supported the first phase of the development, essential marine infrastructure, with a \$12.89 million Regional Infrastructure Fund loan. Works will include a new 110-tonne vessel hoist (also known as a Straddle Lift) and a purpose-built Marine Services Centre with 5,000 sqm of office, retail and workshop spaces in Phase 1. The marina's maintenance hardstand area will increase from the current 14 bays to 54 bays.

Nelson Marina's hardstand and straddle lift upgrade represents a critical investment in regional economic infrastructure, filling an industry void left as a result of Port Nelson upgrading their facilities to a large 550 ton Straddle Lift. The two projects are complementary and combined will set Nelson up as a premier marine service centre for New Zealand. The project will:

- Create skilled employment opportunities during construction and ongoing marine servicing operations.
- Support economic resilience by delivering a future-proofed maintenance facility for the expanding mussel barge fleet and inshore fishing sector, key drivers of regional food production and export revenue.
- Enable formation of a Marine Services Cluster, catalysing high-value jobs in marine engineering, vessel servicing, and support industries.

- Align with sustainability objectives through installation of modern wash-down and waste management systems, minimising environmental impacts.
- Boost supply chain efficiency for primary industries, ensuring vessel turnaround times are reduced and operational productivity is enhanced.

This project directly meets regional marine industry needs identified in the Nelson Marina Masterplan and supports New Zealand's broader goals of decarbonising industry and building economic resilience.

The Nelson Marina extension will unlock significant economic potential through the provision of new berthage designed for both recreational and commercial vessels, including mussel barges and the inshore fishing fleet.

The extension responds to an identified market gap and supports regional ambitions to become a national centre of excellence for small and medium commercial vessels, underpinning future-proofed prosperity. The Nelson Marina currently has a waiting list of 260, including strong demand from the local commercial fleet. This typically amounts to a six-year wait list.

The Marine Services Centre will drive employment growth in the marine services sector, supporting a wide range of skilled trades and fostering collaboration, innovation and business development across the sector. It will enhance service support for the inshore fishing fleet, aquaculture vessels, and recreational users, improving operational efficiency and vessel turnaround times.

The scale of existing and forecast demand means there is a need for investment across Te Taihu's port and marina infrastructure assets. We have worked with our neighbours in Marlborough to map forecast demand and analysed how our marine industry infrastructure assets strategically complement each other (from Port Taranaki in the west, to Havelock and Picton in the east). Development of one regional asset will not impact the commercial viability of others, due to the forecast growth in commercial vessels (e.g. 3,000 ha of additional consented water space in Golden and Tasman Bay will support 19 new commercial vessels and \$47 million of new farming infrastructure that will need to be maintained by service vessels.)



Nelson Marina concept rendering. Credit: Wardale



Nelson Marina and Port. Credit: Tim Cuff

## Supporting regional aquaculture growth

### How can the Government help:



- Develop a longer-term nationally consistent approach to consenting Open Ocean Aquaculture e.g. to build business confidence for development.
- Look for further opportunities to ease regulatory and compliance burdens, where the risks are low e.g. condition retirement.
- Identify opportunities to address infrastructure deficits, via funding and addressing regulatory barriers, e.g. so new infrastructure projects can be accelerated or consented over longer timeframes.

#### Readiness:

Industry is ready to engage with Government immediately.

Aquaculture continues to be a high-priority sector for our region and for the Government; as highlighted in the Aquaculture Development Plan 2025. Workable policy, fit-for-purpose regulations and meaningful action by central Government have material and significant benefits for our region and for the potential of the Blue Economy. An example of this is the Extended Duration of Coastal Permits Bill 2024, which has reduced consenting costs for some operators and improved investor certainty that supports long-term planning and growth.

#### Areas of focus for Government:

The sector would strongly encourage a fit-for-purpose aquaculture regulatory regime, one that:

- supports both existing and new marine farms,
- enables timely and cost-effective consent decisions and conditions,
- allows flexibility for trials and innovation, and
- contributes to profitability while ensuring ongoing biosecurity.

To ensure regional aquaculture growth is optimised, our need to work closely with Government remains as important as ever. Our eagerness and readiness to engage with Government remains high.

Securing both public and private investment in aquaculture science and research, aligned with sector priorities and commercial challenges, remains critical.

More broadly, investment into critical infrastructure (roads and housing) will directly enable our sector's ability to attract and retain talent.

A key factor in future success will be high-trust relationships and collaboration. Our region is fortunate to have AQNZ, the MPI Aquaculture Unit, the NMIT Aquaculture Programme, the BSI Plant and Food Group, and the Cawthron Institute all based locally: the advantages of this co-location are significant to our relationship building.



New Zealand King Salmon's two pilot pens shown temporarily located in the Pelorus Sounds.

After a nearly 7-year consenting journey that cost around \$7 million, New Zealand King Salmon is celebrating the installation of the first Blue Endeavour pens. NZKS's Blue Endeavour project has been a test-bed for large scale innovation investment.

The aquaculture sector is eager to partner with Government to improve consenting and compliance processes, which will improve business confidence and willingness to invest in other transformational projects.

New Zealand King Salmon's Blue Endeavour pens under tow, Pelorus Sounds. Credit: New Zealand King Salmon

## Retaining viable channel access into Port Motueka

### How can the Government help:



- Funding towards technical feasibility costs.
- Engagement with Government in relation to RME Reforms.

#### Readiness:

Tasman District Council is ready to engage with Government immediately.

Viable access to Port Motueka is essential to the region's ability to remain resilient and connected after extreme weather events (e.g. when the Takaka Hill State Highway 60 is closed, barges from Port Motueka deliver essential food, medicine, equipment and personnel into Golden Bay).

Vessel access into Port Motueka is challenging. Larger vessel access is tide-dependant, and even the grounding of smaller vessels is common due to the shifting sands on the bar and in the inlet. Extreme weather events have increased deposits of silt, which have heightened both the scale of the problem and the need to find a solution.

Industry and community users are exploring options for all-tide access, and potentially investment in new facilities to support the fishing fleet and additional marine engineering and maintenance services. Meanwhile, the Tasman District Council is undertaking a Structure Plan for Port Motueka, and will be drafting provisions for a new Port Zone. Whilst this more



comprehensive planning work continues (through to 2027), there is an **urgent need to maintain tide-dependent access in the existing channel, and understand the best technical approach for doing so.**

Government has now placed a hold on most plan changes and is to advise on what it proposed through new standardised zones. Tasman District Council will then consider whether to draft new port zone provisions or not, and what area the zone would cover.

The Motueka Boat Club has an existing consent to dredge around the marina and up to the end of the commercial Talley's Wharf, and existing port users have invested in maintenance dredging within this consented area when it is required.

However, a new consent is required to enable dredging from the existing consented boundary, out to the open sea, so that the existing channel access remains viable. Maintaining tide-dependant access is crucial to the ongoing productivity of Port Motueka and the businesses it supports.

Tasman District Council seeks Government support<sup>4</sup> with technical feasibility advice and information to inform their decision-making on:

- The optimum, most cost-effective option for maintaining existing tide-restricted channel access.
- Any feasible long term options for new all-tide channel access – noting the significant consenting issues and conservation and cultural challenges associated with cutting into the sand bar, and the coastal morphology risks of investing in capital works to shift sand.
- Indicative costs and preliminary designs for undertaking the works.

Once received, technical advice will enable Council to engage with port users and wider stakeholders on next steps and give existing port users the confidence to advance their longer-term Development Plan. Technical guidance on channel access options will also inform the Council's drafting of Port Zone provisions, to ensure the needs of the Port to retain viable access are balanced with other environmental considerations.

Longer term, providing for all-tide access to the Port will support commercial fishers, tourism operators (the Wilsons and Abel Tasman Sea Shuttle large vessels), as well as recreational boaties.

<sup>4</sup> The level of technical support required is highly specialised and costly. It would ensure we can leverage international best practice and expertise.

# Moananui Blue Economy Cluster

## How can the Government help:



- Engagement with Government on the long-term growth of the Moananui Blue Economy Cluster.
- International leadership and advocacy that raises the profile of our Blue Economy capabilities and competitive advantage.

### Readiness:

Moananui are ready to engage with Government immediately.

Moananui – New Zealand’s Blue Economy Cluster – was established with Government support in 2023. During its two-year pilot phase, Moananui catalysed over \$8 million in investment.

The vision and objectives of the Cluster to accelerate growth of New Zealand’s Blue Economy remain the same, however, as the pilot phase’s seed funding has ended, and without further Government support, Moananui has moved to a new model, hosted by the Nelson Regional Development Agency.

Over 20 partner companies from across the country are collaborating to stimulate innovation, commercialisation and growth, across diverse industries including aquaculture, fisheries, biotech, bluetech, ocean energy, research, engineering and infrastructure.

Partners are continuing to explore long-term viable models to support the Moananui Cluster’s operational costs, and remain committed to Moananui’s goals, and the potential for the Blue Economy to unlock transformational, scaled growth remains a key economic focus for our region.



Baby snapper. Credit: Cawthron Institute



Mussel spat. Credit: Cawthron Institute

Moananui nurtures Blue Economy projects, some of which are ‘spun out’ of Moananui at the project implementation stage. An example of this, and the next priority project for Moananui, is the recently opened Blue Economy Innovation Hub in Port Nelson, called Blue House. The Blue House partnership is an initiative between the NRDA, Westpac and Kernohan Engineering, and follows a pre-feasibility study undertaken in 2024.



Travel lift in operation at Port Nelson. Photo provided by Kernohan Engineering; Credit: Tim Cuff



The BSI Plant and Food Group's flume tank. Credit: Melissa Banks

Investing in essential infrastructure that supports the wellbeing, safety, and connectedness of our communities. These projects ensure the region remains adaptive and resilient by enhancing critical assets, improving access to services, and future-proofing facilities against environmental and economic pressures.

## Project Whakatupuranga: Nelson Hospital

## Transport and roading infrastructure: The Hope Bypass

### How can the Government help:



Maintained commitment to delivering the long-term objectives and outcomes of the multiple phases of the Project Whakatupuranga Nelson Hospital Redevelopment.

- Public release of detailed budgets and phasing as soon as possible.
- Streamlined processes where possible across the project, to accelerate delivery.
- We will continue to work with Government agencies to prepare for the implementation of this significant project (e.g. workforce development, mitigating construction impacts on arterial traffic routes.)
- Inclusion of clauses with main contractors (approved by Te Whatu Ora’s National Panel) mandating/incentivising use of regionally-based sub-contractors when this is an option.

#### Readiness:

We are already actively engaging with Government.

### How can the Government help:



- Confirmation of funding/financing as soon as possible.
- Streamlined processes where possible to accelerate delivery of this critical infrastructure investment.

#### Readiness:

Tasman District Council and Nelson City Council are already working with NZTA staff on a range of matters relating to the Bypass design.

The case for Project Whakatupuranga Nelson Hospital Redevelopment has been previously presented to Government. The Government’s commitment in Budget 25 to build a new 128 bed inpatient building, and upgrade the hospital’s two existing main buildings, is enabling a significant phase of the multi-phased redevelopment.

The proposed Hope Bypass will address the significant congestion on SH6 – our only strategic road link connecting Tasman and Nelson, our airport and our port. The case for the Hope Bypass has been previously presented to Government. The project was approved on the October 2024 Fast Track List and is currently at Investment Case stage.

The planned upgrade to SH6 is an essential upgrade to an essential infrastructure asset which has not been improved for decades - during which time our region has experienced rapid growth. The need to address the Richmond Queen Street bottleneck is now critical and immediate.

## Waimea Plains infrastructure strategy

### How can the Government help:



- The Council is seeking Government support to identify whether there are faster/more efficient models for delivery of this regionally significant infrastructure investment, including advice on the merits of a PPP.
- The Council is seeking advice on incorporating best-practice climate change mitigation across all aspects of the project, and advice on collaboration best practice – especially if proposed technical solutions and models are innovative and involve new ways of working together.
- The Council is seeking affordable access to early technical advice:
  - Best-practice resilience advice for major river crossings.
  - Best practice for measures/KPI's progress reporting and programme management structures.
  - A national approach on future growth modelling.
  - A national approach supporting development of infrastructure modelling resources.
  - A national approach to funding large infrastructure projects.
- The Local Government (Water Services) Bill is proposing design solutions and case studies to inform all Councils. Tasman District Council would benefit from the opportunity to have oversight of proposed technical solutions as early as possible.

#### Readiness:

Council is ready to engage with Government immediately.

Tasman District Council is undertaking the design and scoping phase for a \$100 million + project to upgrade the water and wastewater infrastructure between Richmond, Hope, Brightwater and Wakefield. The Council has identified this infrastructure upgrade as essential. The project includes a requirement of additional capacity to cater for housing growth in the townships of Hope, Brightwater and Wakefield. The proposed new networks will be designed to be more resilient to the impacts of natural hazard events in the future.



Brightwater sub-division. Credit: Tasman District Council

## Housing affordability and supply

### Implementing the Joint Nelson Tasman Future Development Strategy

Our two councils collaborate fully to provide united regional spatial planning, via the Joint Nelson Tasman Future Development Strategy (NTFDS). This 30-year strategic plan outlines where there is potential for future housing and business growth, provides an updated evidence base to inform decision-making, and meets our objectives under the NPS-UD 2020. It outlines how we will accommodate growth whilst protecting our economic assets (land and water).

Both councils are implementing multiple actions to support the FDS, including new public transport infrastructure, enabling infrastructure in three waters and transport, leveraging the Council's property portfolio to support intensification and growth, providing capacity for growth within infrastructure planning, and plan changes to zone land for housing and business and to allow for intensification.

#### How can the Government help:



- We seek Government interventions and investments to help us accelerate our delivery of FDS outcomes. These include:
- More central Government guidance and certainty around how Government will manage/mandate climate change adaptation over a medium to long-term horizon. New modelling and LiDAR mapping has provided increased visibility of climate risks across our region, including areas of valuable flat land within the central Nelson City area – which under normal circumstances should be a prime location for investment into housing intensification. Lack of national guidance and certainty around what Government and the insurance sector may or may not do/impose/mandate as climate adaptation becomes more critical, is impacting developer confidence to invest in housing and commercial projects in some key urban areas.



Totara Street housing. Credit: Nelson Tasman Social Housing Trust



Kawai Street South housing. Credit: Nelson Tasman Social Housing Trust



Berryfields development. Credit: Martin De Ruyter/Stuff

## Improving our supply and mix of quality, affordable housing

Our housing affordability and inadequate supply of housing affects our ability to attract and retain talent and investment. We note two large housing developments are pre-qualified and included in Schedule 2 of the Fast-Track Approvals Act 2024. Our ask of Government does not relate to individual housing developments at this stage.

### How can the Government help:



Through engagement between council staff, iwi and housing providers:

- New funding mechanisms to cover the upfront cost of providing serviced land for housing. Zoning land is only the first step in enabling housing growth. Currently, financial constraints affect councils' ability to provide fully serviced land. New funding mechanisms could bridge the upfront costs incurred by councils ahead of securing Development Contributions from developers.
- Land rezoning for residential or business use without the current requirements for servicing to be in the ground, or planned and financed in advance through the LTP. When land is zoned for development, it provides certainty and improves confidence to invest.
- A streamlined Plan Change process to recognise work completed under the FDS framework – to reduce Plan Change process time and costs.
- New, clear national guidance on issues affecting confidence to invest e.g. Government's planned climate change adaptation measures and more mandates.

## Iwi-led housing projects require access to available land

Ka Uruora was founded as an iwi-led response to a systemic and persistent housing crisis, forming collaborative partnerships with service and funding providers to deliver a range of housing solutions (e.g. community rentals, affordable rentals, shared ownership, rent to buy). Ka Uruora is a registered CHP operating in the Taranaki and Te Taihū regions, and has also delivered projects in Tāmaki Makaurau. Te Taihū iwi members of Ka Uruora are Ngāti Tama, Te Ātiawa, Rangitāne, Ngāti Rārua and Ngāti Kūia. (Ka Uruora's reach includes Marlborough.)

Our discussions with iwi have highlighted that:

- Through Ka Uruora, our iwi already have a proven housing model that is working well.
- Our iwi are ready to lead.
- Access to buildable, affordable land in Nelson and Tasman is a key barrier. A small number of players have potential housing land-banked.

### How can the Government help:



To facilitate interventions that unlock housing land for iwi to develop. For example, land in Kiangā Ora's portfolio not planned for development, and council owned land that can be sold at a price that is acceptable and viable for both parties.

# Waimea Community Dam – review of financial mechanisms

## How can the Government help:



Consideration of two options outlined in our 2025 Waimea Community Dam Briefing:

- Renegotiating the terms of CIIL's loans.
- Review of the complete financial stack for the Dam and review the Waimea Water Limited entity and shareholder agreements.

### Readiness:

Dam shareholders are ready to progress discussions with Government immediately

A Briefing to Government Ministers<sup>5</sup> has outlined the significant consequences of the Dam's circa \$130 million cost overrun (largely driven by the Covid pandemic and geological issues).

From the irrigators' perspective, this need to renegotiate loan terms is driven by:

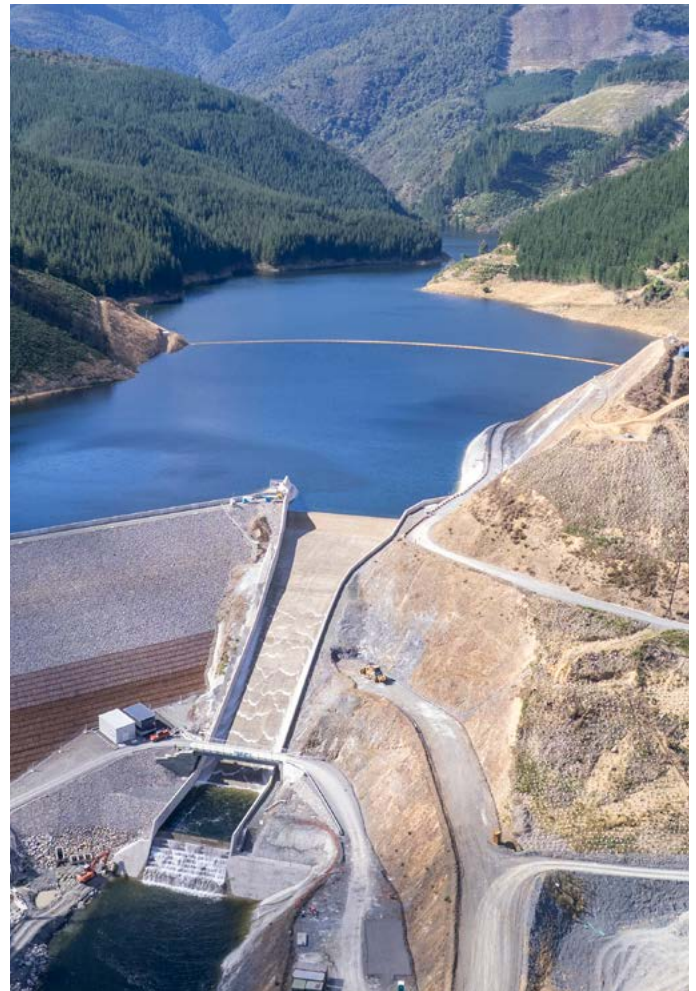
- The final and substantially increased project cost of building the Dam is modelled to increase water charges to irrigators beyond an economically viable level;
- Existing loan terms place an annual obligation on WIL to increase uptake of water shares. Increased water charges, the eroding of potential irrigable land, and the prevailing economic conditions means the required sale of new water shares is no longer realistic;
- The current economic performance of the horticultural sector, exacerbated by recent severe weather events, is placing the large shareholders in Waimea Irrigators Limited under financial pressure;
- Waimea Irrigators Limited is at real risk of high levels of payment default from its shareholders.

The financial stack for the Dam is distributed across more than 20 financial mechanisms, required to accommodate seven staged refinancings as costs increased. This suite of financial mechanisms include a range of borrowing rates and terms; some more concessional than others. Some need to be refinanced as early as 2033. Renegotiating the terms of our CIIL loans would give shareholders longer-term certainty and potentially more concessional terms.

Renegotiating the complete financial stack, and a review of the Waimea Water Limited entity and shareholder agreements, would allow all parties to agree a more fit-for-purpose intergenerational solution that will allow shareholders to manage the substantial debt burden.

Our region has built the largest dam in New Zealand since the Clyde Dam, providing essential water security. Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic arrived at the worst possible time for an infrastructure build of this size.

From the region's perspective, the Waimea Community Dam remains vital to the future of the Tasman region. Without Government intervention, and financial support, its current financial structure risks undermining the substantial economic benefits on which its business case rests. The debt burden on irrigators imposes unsustainable costs, limiting their ability to invest in productive land uses and innovation that could create higher-value products and new jobs; which would help to drive the economic growth that our region urgently needs.



Waimea Community Dam, Eves Valley, Tasman. Credit: Tim Cuff

<sup>5</sup> Briefing to Ministers, from the NRDA on behalf of shareholders, dated 29th November 2024. Follow up letter to Ministers, from shareholders, dated 24th September 2025.

# Motueka Master Plan

## How can the Government help:



- That the Ministry for the Environment fund the Technical Advisory Group to support the Motueka Master Plan as a national example of growth and climate resilient spatial planning, offering transferable insights for other coastal communities.
- Clear policy guidance on translating national economic, housing and climate resilient objectives into local Master Planning processes, unlocking coordinated action and investment at all levels.

### Readiness:

The Tasman District Council is ready to engage with Government immediately.

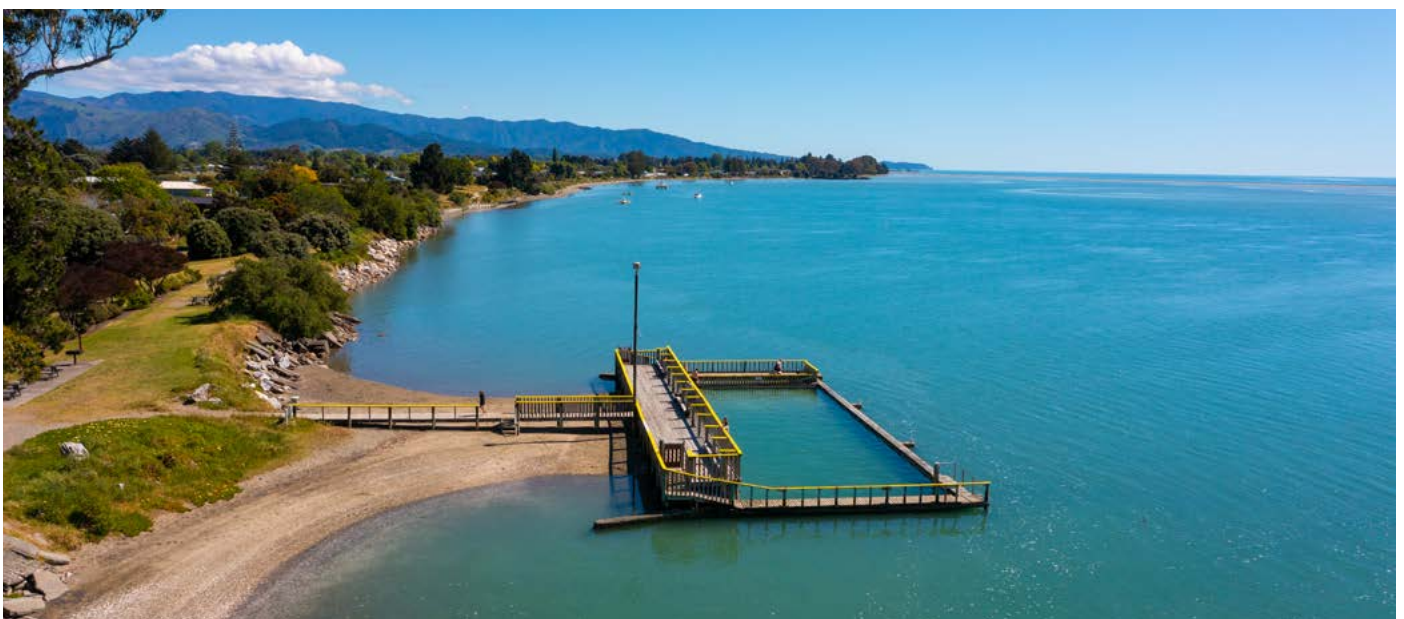
Tasman District Council is commencing a Master Planning process for the town of Motueka, which will take several years to complete. The town is adjacent to the Tasman Bay coast and the Moutere Inlet, is low-lying, and therefore vulnerable to sea-level rise and severe weather events, including flooding from the Motueka River. With a population of 8,290, Motueka is Tasman District's second largest town and a service centre and tourism hub to a much wider area.

Motueka and surrounds contributes to Te Taihū's national reputation as a significant seafood/fishing and horticulture area, including Port Motueka and a range of horticultural/orchard businesses also growing potential for iwi enterprise aligned with sustainable development.

The Master Plan will address complex issues of spatial and infrastructure planning, economic development, cultural values and climate resilience. This process presents an opportunity for the Motueka Master Plan process to be a leading example from which other coastal Councils in New Zealand can learn from (or participate in directly).

A key objective will be to empower improved economic, social, cultural, and environmental wellbeing for Motueka and surrounds. The Council is seeking Government support to help fund or otherwise enable access to international expertise and best practice.

To do this work, there is benefit in forming a Technical Advisory Group, including national and/or international experts and representatives from the New Zealand insurance industry. At estimated costs of establishing a Technical Advisory Group to support the Master Plan of approximately \$200,000, Tasman District Council is seeking Government support with costs. Tasman District Council currently has no operational budget provision for a Technical Advisory Group.



Motueka Sea Baths. Credit: Oliver Weber

## VIBRANT PLACES AND HERITAGE

Investing in the vibrancy and character of our region through projects that enhance recreation, protect heritage assets, and activate key public spaces. These initiatives strengthen community liveability, attract visitors, and preserve the region's unique character; delivering long-term social and economic value aligned with Government priorities for regional growth and resilience.



## Mountain biking and trail cycling opportunities

We have prioritised mountain biking (MTB) and trail cycling opportunities for strengthening our Visitor Economy; leveraging our existing regional advantage, based on our compelling existing assets. Our region is one of only six global destinations to hold a Gold Status ranking from the International Mountain Biking Association.

Our two Great Rides are significant attractions. In 2023, the Great Taste Trail generated a direct spend economic impact of \$34 million, and attracted over 419,000 users. The Great Taste Trail was badly affected by the Tasman Flood Events. Government funding was allocated to restore the trail to ensure key sections in time for the 2025/26 summer visitor season.

## Enabling access through the Abel Tasman National Park

### How can the Government help:



- Intervene to fast track the updating of the Abel Tasman Management Plan (2008 - 2018), so that mountain biking can be considered, utilising the existing inland track.
- Grant Funding to support a Feasibility Study of the route's design and construction costs, and to support a programme of engagement and consultation.
- Work with us to identify a timely consenting and regulatory process.

#### Readiness:

We are ready to engage with Government and stakeholders immediately. It is timely to consider this request.

The development of a mountain biking (MTB) track through Abel Tasman National Park would provide an internationally significant cycling experience, and extend our MTB offering as a year-round attraction. Managing severe seasonality issues is a key challenge for our region, and enabling MTB access through the Abel Tasman National Park would be a significant attraction for our shoulder seasons.

A 2023 study (by BERL, commissioned by the NRDA) estimated that MTB at that time generated \$30.3 million in direct spending benefits for Nelson

Tasman, with potential to realise a further \$15 million in economic benefits for the region per annum through MTB. This figure excludes the additional revenue that MTB through the Abel Tasman National Park would generate.

Enabling MTB access through the Abel Tasman National Park requires a first step of across-Government support, and potential intervention, so the Department of Conservation can enable the project within its regulatory and park management frameworks.

As a priority, Government intervention is needed to update the Abel Tasman Management Plan (2008-2018) which is out of date, to enable DoC to consider new experiences such as mountain biking on the underutilised inland track within the National Park.

The Department of Conservation sought feedback in February 2025 on modernising the conservation system. The NRDA made a submission to this process, requesting an update to the Abel Tasman Management Plan to consider mountain biking in the National Park.

DoC have also recently sought expressions of interest for renewing concessions in the Abel Tasman National Park which expire 30 April 2027. The NRDA also submitted to this process, again submitting our interest in providing a mountain biking experience in the Abel Tasman National Park.

## Nelson to Pelorus Hoiere off-road MTB/bike packing connection

### How can the Government help:



Engage with officials to consider appropriateness of this project for Investment Infrastructure Fund funding.

The Nelson Tasman Cycle Trails Trust has assessed routes between Nelson and Pelorus. Initial Feasibility Funding is required to finalise trail design, gain resource consent and build an investment case, so the project can be positioned as for a shovel ready project. Initial estimates for construction are \$1.8 million.

A proposed dedicated MTB/bike packing track between Nelson and Pelorus would be built adjacent to the existing Maungatapu Track (a 4WD pylon maintenance track). This off-road connection would connect Nelson with the Havelock to Pelorus Hoiere cycle route currently being constructed. It would significantly strengthen our Top of the South connectivity, providing connectivity for cycle tourists and mountain bikers between Picton and Nelson/Tasman/Golden Bay and the West Coast. It would leverage Government investment already made into the Whale Trail, to strengthen the Top of The South's profile as a premium cycling destination.



Richmond Ranges - mountain bike riders.

## Nelson Provincial Museum – Archives, Research & Collection facility project

### How can the Government help:



Work with us to find solutions to our \$1.2 million funding shortfall, so that work to protect our region's taonga can commence.

**Readiness:**  
Construction is ready to proceed.

Preserving the Nelson Tasman Regional Heritage Collection is a critical priority for our region. Currently, this nationally significant collection is housed in a deteriorating, flood-prone, asbestos-roofed facility at Isel Park in Stoke; an increasingly urgent risk to the region's taonga (treasures) and heritage.

The Tasman Bays Heritage Trust, which governs the Nelson Provincial Museum as a Council-Controlled Organisation, is committed to delivering a purpose-built Archive, Research, and Collection (ARC) facility by 2027. This project will safeguard the region's heritage while enhancing access to knowledge, research, and education.

Following the cessation of Ministry for Culture and Heritage capital funding in Budget 2024, a \$7 million funding gap emerged for the originally planned Church Street development. In response, the Trust has worked in close collaboration with our two councils, iwi representatives and independent specialists to identify a revised, fit-for-purpose solution that is financially achievable and future-proofed.

An alternative site in Richmond has been identified, offering a practical and cost-effective opportunity to reduce the funding shortfall from \$7 million to just \$1.2 million. This new plan, designed as a single-storey, purpose-built facility, delivers the same core outcomes at a significantly lower cost. It also presents the additional benefit of establishing a museum presence in Tasman District.

A comprehensive Business Case has been developed, a fixed-price construction partner secured, and construction is ready to commence.

A challenge through this process has been raising awareness of the risks facing this irreplaceable collection due to inadequate storage facilities. This project represents a tangible, high-impact investment in the region's cultural future and a vital step in protecting heritage for future generations.



Nelson Provincial Museum Archive. Credit: Daniel Allen

# Nelson Cathedral

## How can the Government help:



Nelson Cathedral and the Nelson Anglican Diocese continue to actively fundraise for the \$20 million required to future proof the Cathedral building – an asset of regional, cultural and economic importance. Engagement with Government is requested, so relevant opportunities for potential Government support (monetary or otherwise) can be identified as soon as possible.

### Readiness:

Ready to engage with Government immediately.

Nelson Cathedral remains a building of regional and national significance, not only for religious use but also as an important tourist destination and performing arts venue. Required earthquake strengthening (\$17 million) along with enhancements (approximately \$5 million) will further all aspects of the Cathedral's importance to the region. Internal enhancements are specifically targeting the performing arts to ensure the Cathedral continues to fill the niche seating capacity of 400-500. (NB. The Cathedral provides a critical role as a venue for hosting performing arts events.) Tourism will be enhanced by a new northern entrance-way connecting the Cathedral more directly to the city via the iconic Cawthron Steps. (The Cathedral is open all day, every day, for visitors.)

A new governance structure has been put in place involving the Cathedral and Nelson Anglican Diocese. Resource consent was submitted to Nelson City Council in November 2025 and a Project Manager is in place.

Engagement with Government remains critical. Government support (monetary or otherwise) will help us to secure necessary funds, so the implementation of this important work can be achieved.

## *Future investment and developments under planning*

# Nelson Haven & precincts activation

Early partnership discussions with Government are sought as Nelson City Council develops its Haven/Waterfront Spatial Plan to unlock the potential of the waterfront area along Wakefield Quay, Haven Road and connections to the City.

Supported by a Waterfront Development Taskforce, this Plan will inform priorities for Council's Long Term Plan 2027-2037, with scope including: Waterfront connections and public amenities; Mana Whenua storytelling; improved public access to the sea; and encouraging private sector investment opportunities.

Under the Spatial Plan process, opportunities will be identified for the Council to partner with Government on a **regional tourism venture to support the Haven as a regional anchor destination, leveraging the marine industry/Blue Economy.**

The Council is ready to engage with Government immediately in its planning stages, with project specific opportunities to be presented as they are developed.

# Tasman flood events 2025

The Tasman Severe Weather Events of June and July caused widespread damage and disruption.

## Key findings:

- Up to \$262 million of cumulative GDP losses in Nelson Tasman due to flood-induced damage to primary production capacity and reduced visitor demand (\$200m forestry, \$45m horticulture and viticulture, \$11m livestock, \$6m tourism and \$0.4m aquaculture).<sup>6</sup>
- \$48.4 million of lost GDP occurring over the next 12 months.
- The comprehensive costs of infrastructure repairs (both public and private) are not yet known, including shortfalls in insurance payouts, and the scale of repairs that are acute versus those that need longer-term solutions.
- Economic activity occurring directly within the flood-affected areas represents one third of the Tasman District total. In 2024 the flood affected area generated \$1.13 billion and supported just over 9,500 jobs.
- 248 ha of apples and pears and 42 ha of kiwifruit were impacted.
- Initial information indicated 5 ha of hops will need replanting: this figure is expected to increase as more robust data is obtained from the sector.
- 49 livestock farmers suffered either severe or significant damage.
- 7,750 ha of forest were windblown. Additional healthy forest (known as green cull) will be lost, to enable access to harvest windblown trees.
- A large proportion of windblown trees are high value pruned trees.
- The processing of the windblown harvest will have significant implications for the forestry sector. The volume of wood to be recovered is in the order of 3 million cubic metres – an unprecedented timber recovery and export operation for both forestry companies and for Port Nelson, which is underway and likely to last over twelve months.
- Tasman District Council has had to play a significant role in response and recovery to the floods.
- At this stage the costs are still to be confirmed as recovery work continues. Council will have crews working full-time in the river network for the next 18 months to two years.
- The roading network was extensively damaged and Tasman District Council is looking to start some big projects like Mārahau Hill and Motueka River West Road, and is still dealing with storm waste issues.
- Tasman District Council is currently projecting that the costs for response and recovery will be over \$49 million and is anticipating that insurance and Government agency funding towards this will be about \$35 million. **This would mean that Tasman District Council is required to cover over \$14 million towards the floods.**
- Over 250 staff were involved in the floods to support the work of the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). Sixty of these were surge staff from outside the region. These people covered 1,015 shifts or 12,610 hours. Of those surge staff contributed 3,240 hours over 264 shifts.
- The twenty-five-person Response Team (NZ-RT2) supported the EOC involving 1,708 light urban search and rescue volunteer field hours.
- Costs for the EOC operations are still being finalised but estimated to be over \$320,000.

**The announcement of the closure of the Carter Holt Harvey Eve's Valley Timber Mill increased pressure on the sector as they collaborate to address challenges relating to labour availability, logistics, port capacity, and supply to market/market value.**

**Multi-agency support from across Government, throughout the response and on-going recovery, has been critical. We wish to acknowledge the impact this had on our ability to deliver the services and assistance our communities and businesses urgently needed.**

<sup>6</sup> Tasman Floods Key Sectors Impact Assessment, Benje Patterson, August 2025, commissioned by Nelson Regional Development Agency.



**Nelson Tasman Briefing for Ministers 2026**  
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Cawthron Institute, Nelson. Credit: Tim Cuff

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